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SHORTAGE OF WATERFOWL PROVED IN REPORTS TO U. S. BIOLOGISTS

Waterfowl flights and concentrations in various sections of the United States were generally smaller last fall than in previous years, the waterfowl investigations by the Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, show. Shortages were especially severe among canvasbacks, redheads, and lesser scaups--the birds whose breeding ranges are largely in the Northwestern States and in the Prairie Provinces of Canada, the area most seriously affected by the long drought.

In a few regions unusually large local concentrations have been observed, but these, the bureau explains, are a result of the mild weather and of the great reduction in water and food areas that followed the drought. Frequently local observers of these unusual abundances have concluded erroneously that the wildfowl must be proportionately numerous everywhere. Investigations, however, show that except in limited regions ducks were far less plentiful than in past seasons.

These investigations by the Biological Survey constitute the most comprehensive and intensive field study that has ever been undertaken to obtain reliable information on the abundance of waterfowl on their wintering grounds. Biologists of the Department of Agriculture have traced waterfowl migrations

from early fall until the birds reached their wintering grounds. These observations have been supplemented by regular reports from game protectors, wardens, and other field employees; by reports of investigations conducted by various State game commissions; by the records of several hundred experienced observers cooperating with the bureau; and by information based on the experiences of hunters both in Canada and the United States. These sources have been mutually corroborative in indicating a shortage of waterfowl.

There is reason, however, to believe, the Biological Survey stated, that the emergency regulations which shortened the 1931 hunting period were generally respected by American gunners. This restraint, combined with the mild season, tending to retard southward migrations and offering little good hunting weather, has effected a considerable saving of ducks which will be able to return to the nesting grounds in the spring. The numbers of geese have been more nearly normal than those of ducks.

If there is also a favorable 1932 nesting season, the bureau suggests, the condition of the waterfowl may be sufficiently improved to warrant some extension of the hunting privileges next fall. The bureau is continuing its investigations and in the spring will send biologists to important northern breeding grounds to investigate conditions and obtain further information to assist officials in determining the regulatory policy.

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